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The idea of solidarity in Europe

The idea of solidarity has a key role in the dominant ideological strands in European politics and represents a distinguishing trait of European political identity. However, there are different concepts of solidarity in different political ideologies. All concepts of solidarity share an uneliminable core, at the same time differ in important aspects. The meaning of solidarity is determined and modified through the way the concept is integrated into a political language together with freedom, justice and other key concepts. However, does a specific European idea of solidarity exist?

Introduction

At the end of the 18th century in France, the concept of solidarity was transformed from being a legal concept, referring to a common responsibility for debts incurred by one of the members of a group, into a sociological and political concept. During the French revolution, revolutionaries occasionally used *solidarity* instead of *fraternity*, to denote a feeling of political community.¹ In the early 19th century, French utopians and social philosophers, such as Charles Fourier, began to use solidarity as a concept denoting attitudes and relations characterised by reciprocal sympathy among persons who were bound together in a community.² Fourier was also the first to associate solidarity and social policy, and he argued that solidarity should include sharing resources with people in need, a guaranteed minimum income and public support for families.

The pre-Marxist communist Pierre Leroux was the first to elaborate on the concept of solidarity in a systematic way when he published *De l'Humanité* in 1840. Leroux's point of departure was his criticism of two positions that solidarity has continued to confront - Christian charity and of the idea of a social contract as a foundation for society. He criticised Christian charity for being unable to reconcile self-love with the love of others, and for considering the love of others an obligation, and not the result of a genuine interest in community with others. Besides that, equality played no role in Christian charity, he complained. He wanted to supplant the concept of charity with the concept of solidarity, arguing that the idea of solidarity would be a more able one in the struggle for a justly organised society. He rejected Hobbes' and Rousseau's idea of a social contract, and saw the

¹ R. Zoll, *Was ist solidarität heute?* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 2000)

social contract as a misconceived notion because it presupposed an atomised view of the individual.³

Others used the term solidarity to denote the social integration found in small peasant communities. This form of solidarity most often was romanticized, and it was seen as being threatened by capitalism, industrialisation and liberalism. The common concern of these social philosophers was to find a way to combine individualism and collectivism. Solidarity was seen as being a solution, both for those who cherished romantic or reactionary ideas about returning to the harmony and stability that allegedly ruled in the old society and for utopian radicals and the emerging socialist movement. The concern about solidarity and social integration and opposition to Liberalism came to be an enduring characteristic of sociology and political thought in France.

Two hundred years later, solidarity is a key concept not only in social democratic and socialist parties in Europe, but also in Christian democratic parties and in key EU documents as the Treaty of Lisbon. At the same time, it is a concept to which central social philosophers, such as Jürgen Habermas⁴ and Richard Rorty,⁵ devote considerable attention.

Analytical approach and material

From its earliest usages, there were several ideas incorporated in the term solidarity. These ideas may be analysed by identifying four different aspects of the concept:

The boundaries of solidarity – or its degree of inclusiveness. Who are included and who are excluded? Is solidarity limited to the family or are others with whom we interact included? Is solidarity confined to the working class or are small holders and the middle class included? Perhaps the entire nation should be included? Should we draw the line at our national frontiers or should solidarity be expanded to include those who are oppressed in the poor parts of the world?

The foundation or sources of solidarity. Is solidarity built upon self-interest or upon the interests of a community? Is solidarity founded in homogeneity and equality? Does it have a basis in class or in religion? Does solidarity spring from our interaction with other human beings? Is the source of solidarity found in ethics, in altruism, in reason, or in the empathy we have with those who are suffering or are oppressed?

² C. Fourier, *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle. Deuxieme Volume* (Paris, 1922)

³ P. Leroux, *De l'humanité* (Fayard, Paris, 1985 [1840]).

⁴ J. Habermas, 'Gerechtigkeit und Solidarität', in W. Edelstein and G. N. Winkler, *Zur Bestimmung der Moral. Philosophische und Sozialwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Moralforschung* (Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt 1984).

The goal of solidarity. Does solidarity strengthen the working class in the struggle between classes? Does solidarity contribute to social change, reform or revolution? Should solidarity unite different classes? Is the goal of solidarity to create harmony and social integration and to surmount class conflict and differences?

The degree in which collective interests pre-empt individual interests. To what extent does solidarity imply that the individual should resign his or her autonomy and freedom in order to secure collective interests? To what extent does it allow for individual freedom and self-realization?

How, these four aspects were combined and structured determined the content of the many different ideas of solidarity that developed in Europe. Among the many concepts of solidarity, this analysis concentrates on two key concepts of solidarity in European politics – the one which was developed by the labour movement and its political parties and the one that was developed within social Catholicism and taken up by Christian democratic parties and such as the German CDU and the Italian DC and that today is reflected in the values of the umbrella organisation of Christian democratic parties – the European Peoples Party.

The analysis is based on key documents – texts that have been authorised by social democratic and Christian democratic parties such as platforms and programmes and by the Church such as papal encyclicals. The analysis draws primarily on documents from the party which until recently has been the protagonist of European social democracy – the German SPD, with side glances to Northern and Continental social democratic parties. Among Christian democratic parties, the dominant parties have been the German CDU, and until the early 1990's, the Italian DC.⁶ Thus, this is a study of ideology and not of political practice.

Freeden – whose study of political concepts can be applied to the study of values – suggests a model that distinguishes between core concepts, adjacent concepts and peripheral concepts.⁷ In a parallel manner, we may distinguish between core or (as I prefer) basic values, adjacent values and peripheral values. Basic values are those values that the political party has declared to be exactly that, as indicated by the use of the terms basic, fundamental, core, central or equivalent adjectives in the party programme. Adjacent and peripheral values are other values that are mentioned in the programmes without the same accolade. Basic, adjacent and peripheral values are what Gallie sees as being essentially contested concepts.⁸

⁵ R. Rorty, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989).

⁶ Sources and material are discussed more extensively in S. Stjernø, *Solidarity in Europe. The History of an Idea*. (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004).

⁷ M. Freedon, *Ideologies and Political Theory* (Clarendon Press, London, 1996).

⁸ W. B. Galli, 'Essentially contested concepts' (Meeting of the Aristotelian Society, 12.03.1956, 167-198)

Their meanings are not given and they are the object of continuous struggle, interpretation and re-interpretation by contesting participants. Values are identified by terms such as *freedom, justice, equality, solidarity, responsibility, human dignity, subsidiarity, love of ones neighbour*, etc. When a set of basic values are linked together and defined in a stable way, we have a complete political language.

The issues to be discussed are: What is the meaning of solidarity in the two dominant ideological strands of European politics? What are the similarity and differences between their concepts of solidarity in terms of the four aspects mentioned above? Do these concepts share an uneliminable core? How is the meaning of solidarity conditioned by other key concepts in the political languages of social democracy and Christian democracy. Finally, what are the present challenges to the idea of solidarity in Europe?

Labour movement solidarity

The prototype for solidarity became the working class solidarity that developed during and after the industrial revolutions. Working class solidarity was based upon the fusion of self-interest with the interests of the class. The individual was expected to subordinate himself to the collective and to realize his interests as a member of that collective. This idea of solidarity became known as class solidarity. It is the solidarity between workers, and it is based upon the common interest that workers have in opposing their class adversaries. Others, including farmers, the non-working poor, women, and all those people living in non-industrialised countries that were overwhelmingly populated by the poor, were excluded. Karl Marx described the process that created the conditions for the unity and discipline of the new industrial work force, but he rarely applied the term solidarity in his writings or in his speeches. He was generally reluctant to apply emotive terms, but seems to have preferred 'fraternal feelings' when he found it necessary. Supporters of Marx adopted the term in the 1860s, but during the last part of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, concepts like brotherhood, fraternity and unity were applied as frequently as solidarity.

The great revisionist of Marxism, Eduard Bernstein, contributed most to the modern idea of social democratic solidarity, which became so influential - especially in the northern part of Europe. In his *Preconditions of Socialism* published in 1899, Bernstein noted that Marxist predictions had not been fulfilled. Capitalism had survived a number of economic crises and recessions, and the working class had achieved higher wages and better working conditions. Social democracy could no longer wait for the breakdown of capitalism, but had to develop a concrete policy of reform and seek alliances with other classes and groups to

establish a new majority in Parliament.⁹ From this perspective, a restricted idea of class solidarity was not functional.

In 1910, Bernstein published his book *Die Arbeiterbewegung - The Labour Movement*. Here a whole chapter was devoted to 'concepts of rights and the ethics of the labour movements'. By and large, these were concepts which, until then, had been alien to Marxist theory. According to Bernstein, socialist ethics should be built upon three core elements – *equality*, *solidarity*, and *freedom*. The problem, however, was that equality and solidarity had to be balanced against freedom. He argued that it was not possible to have a strong measure of equality and solidarity if you wanted to have freedom at the same time.¹⁰ Thus, a new and more complex idea had been presented, the idea of social democratic solidarity. The same year, the Nestor of Swedish social democracy, Ernst Wigforss published ideas that were similar to Bernsteins. In France, Jean Jaurès did the same, albeit with a somewhat different accent. In the UK, Richard Tawney formulated a social philosophy that furnished the Labour Party with a set of ethical elements, but here social democracy developed without making solidarity such a key term. In the next decades, socialists in other countries contributed their own articulations. In the decades that followed, a fourth value or core element – *justice* – was added to the construction of socialist ethics.

Only a few socialist or social democratic parties introduced the concept of solidarity in their programmes before the conclusion of World War I. The establishment of solidarity as hegemonic among functionally equivalent terms such as *brotherhood*, *fraternity*, *worker unity* took place at the same time that the meaning of solidarity was changed. Solidarity became a dominating value when the socialist parties of Europe became de-radicalised. For the protagonist of European social democracy – the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), the conception of solidarity did not change until 1959 with the *Bad Godesberg Programme*. This was done at the same time that the socialist principle, requiring the nationalisation of industry, was abandoned and the market economy was accepted. The programme declared that the basis for democratic socialism was to be found in Christian Ethics, humanism and classical philosophy. *Solidarity* was proclaimed to be a basic value of socialism, in association with *justice*, *freedom*, and *responsibility*. These were concepts which later - in 1976 - came to be sanctioned by the Socialist International as what we can consider a complete social democratic language of values – in some parties combined with *equality* as well.

⁹ E. Bernstein and H. Tudor, *The preconditions of Socialism* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993).

¹⁰ E. Bernstein, *Die Arbeiterbewegung* (Literarische Anstalt Rütten & Loening, Frankfurt am Main, 1910).

In Scandinavia, the social democratic parties introduced values into their party programmes earlier than the German SPD did. They broadened their idea of solidarity to include first not only workers, but also smallholders, small merchants, and white collar employees, and then to include the whole nation. At the same time, they shifted their conception of the basis of solidarity from class to ethics and altruism. This was key elements in their abandonment of Marxism and part of their social democratization, which took place earlier in these parties than in the SPD. On the other hand, these parties had not developed a complete language of social democratic values as the SPD had done in 1959. A complete social democratic language is not to be found in the Swedish, Norwegian and the Danish social democratic parties until the 1970s.

The socialist/social democratic parties in Southern Europe were even later to adopt a language of social democratic values. The reason for this probably due to the fact that socialist parties there were slow to abandon more traditional Marxist principles and language, and to their competition with large communist parties, which enjoyed strong support from the working class. In France, it was the master of socialist rhetoric, Mitterand, who made solidarity an important concept in socialist programme rhetoric and in his own speeches at the presidential elections in 1981 and 1988. A special trait of French social democracy was the strong association between solidarity and the nation in its programmes. The mainstream social democratic language of basic values was adopted in the programmes of the Spanish PSOE not until the congresses in 1981 and 1989, parallel with a de-radicalisation of economic policies. Whereas the Italian PSI never adopted the mainstream values of European social democracy before it was dissolved after the corruption scandals, the successor of the Communist Party, *Democratici di Sinistra*, did it when it became a member of the Socialist International in 1992. The present centre-left party, *Il Partito Democratico*, has been careful not to formulate a list of fundamental values, except that safety (*la sicurezza*) and legality are mentioned as such in *Manifesto dei Valori* of 2008. Besides, the PD mixtures values and concepts from the two traditions which it represents – inclusion, solidarity, subsidiarity, responsibility, etc.

Thus, surprisingly the discourse of solidarity was not integrated into the programmes of most social democratic parties until 1968 or later. The student revolt, in 1968, revived radical socialist rhetoric. Many social democratic parties feared that they might lose contact with youth and with the newly educated middle class and started a process of programmatic renewal. After 1973, abrupt changes in the price of oil and new mass unemployment created a new situation for social democracy. Now, there was a need for a rhetoric that could serve two purposes at the same time. First, an appeal to *solidarity* could be used to argue for reforms and

for cuts in welfare benefits in order to create employment. Second, an appeal to *solidarity* could be used to defend the welfare state against attacks from the political right, and from the increasing influence of individualist ideology, after the victory of Margaret Thatcher in 1978. When Willy Brandt was elected chairman of the Socialist International in 1976, he revived discussions about social democratic ideology and values, especially concerning the Third World. All this contributed to a renewed interest in the idea of solidarity.

Today, all social democratic parties in Western Europe regard the concept of solidarity as a basic value - together with freedom and justice and, to a varying degree, equality. The different aspects of solidarity were changed and structured in a new way, during the first part of the 20th century. These changes may be summarized as follows:

The Marxist and the Modern Social Democratic Concepts of Solidarity				
	Foundation	Objective/ function	Inclusiveness	Collective orientation
Classic Marxist solidarity	Class interests Recognition of sameness	Realise class interests Revolution Socialism	Restricted: Only the working class, but in all nations	Strong: Individual autonomy is not a theme
Modern social democratic solidarity	Interdependence Acceptance of difference Empathy Compassion Ethics and morality	Create sense of community/ social integration Share risks Self-interest?	Very broad: The entire nation The Third World Women Minorities	Medium to weak? Individual freedom is an accepted value that limits the collective orientation of solidarity. Increasing emphasis on the individual freedom to choose and on flexibility

The British Labour Party has for most of its history been different from the other social democratic parties in Europe in terms of programme language. The programmes of the Labour Party have been written in a more down-to-earth style, avoiding Marxist language in the early phase of its development, from 1900 to World War II and, in recent decades, avoiding any declaration of any set of values as being basic. It has never adopted the standard values that make up the languages of other European social democracies. The reasons for this must be sought in the hegemonic Liberal tradition in the UK. Marxism never became an influential ideology in the labour movement. According to McKibbin, the reasons for this were that enterprises were small, and workers' wages were sufficiently high to permit a certain level of consumption and social life. Individual rights had a strong position, religion

influenced a considerable part of the working class, and influenced intellectual reformist as well, whereas a political elite of Marxist intellectuals did not exist.¹¹

When the Labour Party once again came into power in 1997 with Tony Blair as the Prime Minister, it was with a programme that lacked traditional and highly valued terms, such as *solidarity* and *justice*, in the party election manifesto. Instead, a mixture of communitarian discourse and the language of modernization characterized the party platform. Also the 2005 British Labour Party programme avoided explicit formulations about basic values and solidarity. In this programme, *justice* is the positive word that is most frequently found.

Catholic social teaching

The labour movement and social democracy did not monopolise the concept of solidarity. A permanent challenger came to be social Catholicism, which developed another ideology to meet the challenges of industrialisation, liberalism and individualism. The Catholic Church witnessed with alarm that competitive capitalism uprooted local communities, concentrated workers in miserable conditions in cities, and created great wealth for the few. Both increased individualism and the working class struggle for socialism threatened the position of Catholicism and the Church.

In Germany, Catholic social philosophers such as von Ketteler from the second part of the nineteenth century and von Nell-Breuning and Franz Klüber in the after WWII-period developed Catholic social philosophy by discussing values such as *justice* and *solidarity*.

These ideas became the basis for the development of a Catholic idea of solidarity. Von Kettelers ideas influenced the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891. It denounced both liberalism and socialism, and argued for social integration on the basis of justice. The encyclical promoted the idea of a capitalist society, with social reforms and just wages that were based upon family values. A network of intermediate institutions should exist between the families and the state. Thus, the state should not monopolise social responsibility, but assist such institutions in fulfilling their role as intermediate institutions. This idea was to be further developed into the principle of subsidiarity by Pius XI some decades later.

Leo XIII's concerns for promoting social integration represented an attempt to modernise the Church, and it brought the Church closer to participation in practical politics. Nonetheless, Leo affirmed the paternalist tradition, and he rejected the idea that the poor and the working class should take political action. Change should not be forced by concerted

¹¹ R. McKibbin, 'Why was there no Marxism in Great Britain?' In R. McKibbin (ed.), *The ideologies of Class*.

actions of the underprivileged. Instead, necessary changes must be initiated, by those who enjoyed privileges and by all those who benefited from the existing order. His key concepts were *friendship* and *fraternal love*. One hundred years later, John Paul regarded the idea of friendship in the *Rerum Novarum* as a precursor to the Catholic concept of solidarity.¹²

In his encyclical entitled *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931, Pius XI elaborated upon the themes discussed by Leo XIII forty years earlier. As did Leo, Pius directed his encyclical against the reckless competition and untamed individualism of capitalist society. However, *Quadragesimo Anno* discusses the idea of a just wage and the principle of subsidiarity in more concrete terms. Whereas the definition of a just wage had been unclear in *Rerum Novarum*, the idea of a just wage was now strengthened and clarified by the suggestion that a *socially just family wage* could be defined as a wage that was sufficient for a worker to provide for himself and his family. In return, workers should not make claims that would ruin their employers.¹³

Pius elaboration of the idea of subsidiarity grew out of his concerns about the fragility of the social order. Pius XI had witnessed the development of the modern state in its totalitarian version, and he worried that the state might destroy civil society by absorbing the functions of professional and social organisations. On the other hand, he recognised that many problems could only be solved by the state. However, the state had to acknowledge that it was a part of the hierarchic order of subsidiary organisations. He warned that ...as it is wrong to take from the individual and entrust to society what may be managed by private initiative, it is an injustice, a sin, and a disturbance of the right order if larger and higher organisations usurp functions that might be provided by smaller and lower instances (ibid).

This became a classic formulation of the principle of subsidiarity, and the idea was now definitively integrated into Catholic social teachings. The state should take responsibility only when the individual, the family, voluntary organisations and local communities were unable to fulfil their roles. In addition, society and the state should support intermediating organisations when these did not have sufficient resources to fulfil their obligations. Pius elaboration of the idea of subsidiarity implied a careful balance in the rights and responsibilities of the individual, the family, and of other societal organisations, including the state.

Social Relations in Britain 1880-1950. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990.

¹² Paolo Giovanni II, *Lettera Enciclica Centesimus Annus del Sommo Pontefice Giovanni Paolo II nel Centenario della 'Rerum Novarum'* (The Vatican, Rome, 1991).

¹³ Pio XI, *Quadragesimo Anno. Lettera Enciclica di S.S. Pio XI* (The Vatican, Rome, 1931).

French and Spanish Catholics did use the concept of solidarity in the decades before *Quadragesimo Anno*, and in Germany, Heinrich Pesch, the father of German *Christlicher Solidarismus* had integrated the concept into his social ethics and economic analysis.¹⁴ Although German Catholics played a key role in preparing *Quadragesimo Anno*, Pius XI did not introduce the concept of solidarity into his encyclical. One hypothesis that may explain its absence may be that the concept of solidarity was still too closely associated with the labour movement and with its alien ideas regarding class struggle.

However, Pius sought to transcend, and not to supplant, personal and private charity, and he introduced the notions of *justice* and of *social charity*. Because market economy was a blind force and a violent energy, it had to be restrained and guided wisely to be useful, he wrote. *Justice* should inspire the institutions and the social life of society and constitute the social and legal order to which the economy should conform. *Social charity* should be the spirit of this order, guarded and maintained by public authority. This combination of justice, social charity and public authority represented a new step in the direction of a Catholic concept of solidarity.

Still, decades would pass before the concept of solidarity was to be found in a papal encyclical, even if the concept of solidarity now had been integrated in German Catholicism several decades earlier.¹⁵ Yet, the concept does not find papal authorisation until the papal encyclical published in 1961. When that was done, the idea of solidarity had to be balanced against the already fully developed concept of subsidiarity. The relationship between the two was to be a distinguishing mark of Catholic social ethics – and later of Christian democracy.

John XXIII was elected pope in 1958. This moderniser within the Church reoriented the relationship between the Church and the world by emphasising that the Christian form of presence in the world should not be one of power, but one of service. John introduced the term *solidarity* into papal writings and teachings in the encyclical *Mater et Magistra* in 1961. Here, he called for government action to assist people in need and to reduce economic inequalities in society and the world: The solidarity of mankind and the awareness of brotherhood to which Christ's teaching leads, demand that the different nations should give each other concrete help of all kinds, not only to facilitate movements of goods, capital and

¹⁴ H. Pesch, *Heinrich Pesch on Solidarist Economics. Excerpts from the Lehrbuch der Natinalökonomie* (University Press of America, Lanham, 1998 [1924]).

¹⁵ See for instance O. von Nell-Breuning and H. Sacher, *Zur Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre* (Verlag Herder, Freiburg, 1954).

men, but also to reduce inequalities between them.¹⁶ A second reference to solidarity, more in line with earlier encyclicals, is also made. Here, the concern for enhanced social integration is reiterated: Workers and employers should respect the principles of human solidarity in organising their mutual relations and live together as befits Christians and brothers.

In these short sentences, the essence of the Catholic concept of solidarity is made clear. Compassion and collective action are called for to help the poor and the underprivileged. Individual charity is transcended because the needs of the poor are simply too massive. Intermediating institutions, or the state if necessary, are needed to act in order to reduce the inequalities that are found in the world community. But solidarity is called for to integrate the different classes in society; their conflicting interests must be transcended in order to establish peace and harmony. *Mater et magistra* linked solidarity to justice, and pointed out that justice was a central concern for the issues of poverty and peace and insisted that the rich should do much more than simply give alms. Moreover, John prudently argued for the establishment of a new economic world order. The right, represented by *Fortune* magazine, attacked *Mater et Magistra* for being wedded to socialist economics and increasingly a sucker for Third World anti-imperialist rhetoric. It was criticised from the left by liberation theologians for showing insufficient concern for the freedom of the person.¹⁷ An established scholar of Catholic social ethics, John Dorr, characterises *Mater et Magistra* as being an opening to the left, but more as a decisive move away from the right.¹⁸ In the next decades, succeeding Popes developed a full language of solidarity in their encyclicals.

John XIII's successor, Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* in 1967 represented the next step. Paul had travelled extensively in Africa and in Latin America before he was elected pope and called for solidarity and more concrete and concerted action in the struggle against hunger and misery in the world.¹⁹ An entire chapter of *Populorum Progressio* was devoted to the solidaristic development of humanity. Paul argued here that free trade was unfair if it was not subordinated to the goals of social justice.

John Paul II, who succeeded Paul VI in 1978, finally made solidarity a dominant theme in the social teaching of the Catholic Church. He expanded the concept and declared that solidarity was a key value for the Church, established a complete language of solidarity,

¹⁶ John XXII, 'Mater et Magistra. Encyclical Letter of John XXIII.' In J. M. Kirwan, *The Social Thought of John XXIII* (Catholic Social Guild, Birmingham, 1964).

¹⁷ D. Goulet, 'Economic systems, Middle Way Theories and Third World Realities. Co-Creation and Capitalism. In J. W. Houck and O. F. Williams, *John Paul II's Laborem Exercens* (University Press of America, Washington, 1983).

¹⁸ D. Dorr, *Option for the Poor. A Hundred Years of Vatican Social Teaching* (Gill and MacMillan, Dublin, 1983).

and defined the relationship between solidarity and other key concepts in Catholic social teaching.

His Polish origin, and his association with the labour union struggle of Lech Walesa and *Solidarność*, may have helped to take the papacy one step further in its elaboration of the concept of solidarity in *Laborem Exercens*, in 1981. Returning to the themes of *Rerum Novarum*, he wrote about wages and social issues, including health care and social insurance. For the first time in an encyclical, *worker* solidarity was made into a theme – and described in a positive way:

...solidarity and common action addressed to the workers...was important and eloquent from the point of social ethics. It was the reaction against the unheard of accompanying exploitation in the field of wages, working conditions and social security for the worker. This reaction united the working world in a community marked by great solidarity.²⁰

John Paul frankly recognised that worker reaction to injustice was justified from the point of view of social morality and he saw the need for new labour movements in different parts of the world. This solidarity must be present and is called for by the presence of the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger, he argued. Even if the struggle for justice might lead to confrontations, he urged workers and employers to acknowledge that both must in some way be united in community. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* in 1989 made *solidarity* a key concept in Catholic social teaching. Again, the point of departure was the relationship between rich and poor. Since nations and individual human beings are dependent upon one another economically, culturally and politically, solidarity is the adequate moral and social attitude, he wrote. Solidarity is not a diffuse feeling of compassion, but a firm and lasting commitment to the best for all. Solidarity helps us to see *the other*, whether the other is a person, a people or a nation.²¹

Finally, in *Centesimus Annus*, in 1991, John Paul developed a complete language of solidarity. On the basis of his own re-reading of *Rerum Novarum*, 100 years after it was published, he linked solidarity to a defined set of other key concepts. These are *personalism*, *love*, *the common good*, *subsidiarity*, *freedom* and *justice*. Personalism means that an individual becomes a person through his or her relationships to others, and the social character of a human being does not fulfil itself in relation to the state, but is realised in different

¹⁹ Paolo VI, *Lettera Enciclica Populorum Progressio di Sua Santità Paolo VI* (*Vita e pensiero, Milano, 1967).

²⁰ John Paul II, 'On Human Work. Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*', in E. McGrath, *The Priority of Labour* (Diaz el Rio, Anand, India, 1989).

²¹ John Paul, 'On social concern. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*', in G. Baum and R. Ellsberg (eds.), *The Logics of Solidarity*, Orbis Books, New York, 1989.

intermediating groups, beginning with the family. Solidarity, John Paul declares, begins in the family, with the love between spouses and the reciprocal care between the generations. Other intermediary organisations activate networks of solidarity and mature into real communities, and in so doing strengthen the social fabric.

The concept of solidarity is closely associated to the concepts of the *common good* and to the idea of justice. Today, justice does not only mean giving from one's over-abundance; it means aiding entire nations that are marginalised and allowing them to enter into the circle of economic and human development. To achieve this, it is necessary to change life-style, ways of production and consumption, and the structures of power that rule the societies of today, John Paul argued. He continued to claim that Catholic solidarity should be based upon an extensive welfare state and a well-developed system of labour laws. A person should express his own personality through work, be protected against unemployment, have the right to unemployment benefits and the right to re-qualify for other forms of employment, if necessary. A person should have the right to a decent salary that can provide for a family *and* for modest savings, etc. On the other hand, the welfare state might make society less responsible. Therefore, *subsidiarity* must balance and delimit solidarity and public interference.

With the publication of *Centesimus Annus*, John Paul had authorised a complete language of solidarity in Catholic social teachings, and had defined solidarity's relationships to other key concepts such as *the person*, *the common good*, *justice*, and *subsidiarity*.

Christian democratic political theory

The ideas of German Catholic social philosophers influenced German politics as well. In Germany, a Catholic party – *Das Zentrum* was established in 1870. *The Zentrum* drew its support from all classes – the aristocracy, the middle class, and the working class. This inter-class foundation became later a distinguishing mark of Christian democratic parties in Europe. In the decades to come, the *Zentrum* inspired the establishment of Catholic parties in other nations, as Don Sturzo's *Partito Popolare Italiano* (PPI). These parties drew a boundary against liberalism and made the conditions of labour a key issue. The preoccupation of German social Catholicism with the concept of solidarity became for first time reflected in a political programme, in *Zentrum's Declaration of Berlin*, in 1909. The organic growth of the community of the German people depends upon the solidarity between all social strata and professional groups, the programme declared. In the spirit of Christian-social view of life, the *Zentrum* wanted to develop the existing feeling of fellowship in the German people to into a

strong consciousness of community. Such formulations about cross-class solidarity combined with the emphasis on a true Christian feeling of community and on the family were repeated in later programmes.

After WWII, German Catholic theologians continued to be preoccupied with solidarity. Oscar von Nell-Breuning argued in his *Zur Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre, On Christian Teaching about Society*, that the basic law of Christian solidarity is opposed to individual and group egoism which makes people place self-interest above the common good, and blocks social commitments.²² The extensive *Herders Social Catechism* declared *solidarity* to be a basic law.²³ Solidarity was necessary to integrate individuals and separate parts of society into an organic totality. Franz Klüber, a professor of Christian sociology, listed three basic principles of Catholic social teaching: the principle of the *person* (distinct from that of the *individual*), the principle of solidarity, and the principle of subsidiarity.²⁴

Gradually, these values were integrated in the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) which was established after the war. In the *Berliner programme* in 1971 most key concepts of the modern Christian democratic ideology were finally introduced. The programme stated that CDU politics were based on the principles of Christian responsibility. The aim, it was declared, was *the freedom of the individual, the responsibility of the person justice, equal opportunity* for everybody, *recognition of the commitment to society*, and the *solidarity between all citizens*. This was the definite integration of Catholic social teaching and the doctrines that had been developed by von Ketteler, Pesch and Nell-Breuning. Four years later, the programme declared *freedom, justice and solidarity* to be the basic values of the party. Solidarity was now applied to the relationship with the Third World for the first time in a CDU programme, although this demand had been found in papal teaching for a long time. The programme now included the Catholic idea of *subsidiarity* as well. Private enterprise and voluntary organisations were to be responsible for providing social services to meet citizens' demand. In 1978, the title of a new programme - *Freedom, solidarity, justice* - signalled a strong interest in values and ideology. Solidarity should mean to stand up for one another, because both the individual and society are left to each other. An individual has a right to assistance and solidarity from others, but at the same time is obliged to stand up for the

²² O. von Nell-Breuning and H. Sacher, *Zur Christlichen Gesellschaftslehre* (Verlag Herder, Freiburg, 1954).

²³ Herder, *Herders Sozialkatechismus. Band Grundfragen und Grundkräfte des sozialen Lebens* (Herder, Freiburg 1959).

²⁴ F. Klüber, *Individuum und Gesellschaft in katholischer Sicht* (Niedersächsischen Landeszentrale für Politisches Bildung, Niedersachsen, 1963).

community and make a personal contribution. Government should support personal initiative and responsible self-help, and solidarity and subsidiarity belong together.

The platform of 1978 marks the full development of Christian democratic ideology and language in the CDU. The emphasis on personalism, freedom, justice, solidarity, and subsidiarity meant that the CDU had now adopted all the key concepts of Catholic social ethics and nothing has been added in this respect later.

In Italy, the PPI had made freedom and social justice key values. It was concerned with social integration in documents and programmes, but this was not accompanied by the introduction of a concept of solidarity. However, after WWII De Gasperi brought solidarity somewhat more into focus in his speeches. Strongly entrenched in Catholic social teaching, he emphasised the need for mediation and integration and argued that the new Christian democratic party should address the whole Italian society and mediate between all classes and social categories. Social solidarity should make both employers and employees feel responsible for production.²⁵ The principles of *human dignity, freedom, rights of the person and of intermediate organisms* and *fraternity* should permeate the state, he declared. Thus, he was preoccupied with the idea of solidarity, but both personal freedom and social justice ranked higher in the hierarchy of ideological concepts in his speeches in the post-war years. Solidarity was closely linked to the key value of social justice. Human solidarity and social justice meant fraternity between human beings, and these concepts should work in minds and conscience. What we need is a people's solidarism in which labour and capital are interwoven and the prevalence of labour is increasing, he said.²⁶

These values and concepts were already reflected in the provisional programme for a new Christian party - *Idee ricostruttive della Democrazia Cristiana* - which De Gasperi and a group of collaborators presented in 1942, and they were repeated and elaborated upon in DC programmes and key documents in the succeeding years. Family values, ethical values, moral conscience, agricultural reform, defence of small property and business, and social justice were established anew as Christian democratic ideology. Christian *fraternity* was emphasised once again as the social cement of society – directed against unfettered egoism and individualism as well as against socialism and collectivism.

In the first years after the war, the term *solidarity* became rapidly and increasingly used in place of equivalent terms such as *fraternity*. The DC declared solidarity with all

²⁵ A. De Gasperi, 'Non diserteremo il nostro posto', in T. Bozza, *Alcide De Gasperi. Discorsi politici 1-2* (Editori Cinque Lune, Roma 1956).

peoples of the world, that solidarity should rule between the peoples of the old Europe, and argued for reforms of social security that confirmed the principle of solidarity to both subordinated and autonomous workers. Thus, a broad concept of solidarity was now established. Social democratic parties at this time had not started to apply solidarity to refer to the relationship with the poor peoples of world. Neither did they use this concept to describe the relationship between the peoples of Europe, as the DC frequently came to do in the following years. The new Italian constitution, approved in 1947, declared that the fulfilment of solidarity should be an absolute obligation of the new republic and integrated other key concepts in Catholic social teaching.

Some have argued that the social doctrine of the Vatican did not influence DC programmes in a distinct manner, except that emphasis on family values and strong anti-communism came to be a common platform for the Papacy and the DC.²⁷ As shown here, this is certainly not the case in terms of programme language and ideology. The social teaching of the Catholic Church and the ideology in DC programmes share many themes and values; the emphasis on the human person, freedom and social justice, the front against egoist individualism and collectivism, solidarity as integration across class boundaries, the continuous emphasis on private property and business etc. Thus, many key themes in Papal teaching were reflected in DC programmes, particularly in the first period after World War II.

The basic values in DC programmes throughout its history have been *freedom, justice*, and *peace*. *Solidarity* has been found in most programmes as well, but not as frequently and well integrated as *freedom* and *justice*. The DC idea of solidarity has consistently been the Catholic inter-class concept that expresses preoccupation about social integration, as it has been in the German CDU. For both parties this concept has served to bridge the gap between the different classes and social categories they appealed to. However, we may note a difference between DC discourse on solidarity and that of the German CDU: The CDU has given *solidarity* a more prominent place in programme language than the DC. From 1975 until today CDU has seen solidarity as a basic value together with freedom and justice, later with *subsidiarity* as well, whereas DC discourse on values in the programmes has been more fragmented, brief and shallow. Surprisingly, CDU programme language reflects the social teaching of the Vatican more strongly than DC programmes did – or as has been emphasised above: Papal teaching largely reflects the values developed in German Catholicism.

²⁶ A. De Gasperi, 'Nella lotta per la democrazia', in T. Bozza, *Alcide De Gasperi. Discorsi politici 1-2* (Editori Cinque Lune, Roma 1956).

DC programmes seem to reflect another trend in terms of ideology, language and values than that of the German CDU. Early post-war programmes mirrored more completely and coherently Catholic social teaching than later programmes. In the two last decades of its existence DC programmes represented continuity in terms of values such as freedom and social justice, but not in respect of solidarity. Whereas the ideology in CDU programmes was initially fragmented, but developed into a coherent whole in the 1970s, the DC developed in the opposite direction. The early programmes coherently reflected the ideology and language of Catholic social teaching, but this was gradually dissolved as it approached moral bankruptcy and organisational dissolution. In Italy, Silvio Berlusconi's *Il popolo della libertà* has adopted all those values in its *Carta dei valori* from 2008. Besides, and may be surprising, it adds *la legalità*.

The common basic values of competing parties

Is there a common uneliminable core in the concepts of solidarity which have been described above? First, they share the idea that human beings are bound together in interdependence. This seems to be the core of all concepts of solidarity, although the meaning and extent of interdependence may vary. Second, both concepts of solidarity see social integration and social inclusion as an objective. Third, this implies for both social democracy and Christian democracy a willingness to use the state to protect individuals against social risks. It is hard to find a concept of solidarity that is combined with a negative attitude to the use of governmental power to intervene actively in society through economic and social policy.

However, this does not mean that the two protagonist of European politics have identical ideas of solidarity. First, as shown in the table below, there are somewhat different conceptions of some of the aspects of solidarity. Not surprisingly, social democratic and Christian democratic parties see the basis of solidarity in different ways. Whereas social democratic solidarity is based on secular conceptions of acceptance of difference, ethics and morality, Christian democratic conceptions echoes with Catholic social teaching. Whereas the objective or function of solidarity is seen in a quite similar way, Christian democratic solidarity emphasizes inter-class integration and social democracy more frequently stress women and minorities. The greatest difference is found in the degree of collective orientation of the two concepts of solidarity, where social democratic solidarity is the more collective.

²⁷ J. Pollard, 'Italy', in T. Buchanan and M. Conway, *Political Catholicism in Europe* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996).

Modern Social Democratic and Christian Democratic concepts of Solidarity				
	Foundation	Objective/ function	Inclusiveness	Collective orientation
Modern social democratic solidarity	Interdependence Acceptance of difference Empathy Compassion Ethics and morality	Create sense of community/social integration Share risks Self-interest?	Very broad: The whole nation The Third World Women Minorities	“Medium/weak?” Individual freedom is an accepted value that limits solidarity Increasing emphasis on the individual freedom to choose and on flexibility
Christian democratic solidarity	Man is created in the image of God. Ethics is inspired by the Christian understanding of humankind. Human dignity Interdependence Individual responsibility to participate and contribute to Gods work	Social integration Social harmony Justice	Broad Inter-class	Weaker The idea of the person and the idea of subsidiarity balance the collective aspects of solidarity

Although solidarity is a basic value in both social democratic and Christian democratic programmes, it is how solidarity is related to other key concepts that specifies its meaning. The configuration of justice, equality, and solidarity conveys another message than the configuration of justice, solidarity, subsidiarity, and personal responsibility. Whereas the first signals a political will to use government power to redistribute and give priority to collective values, the second signals more reluctance to public engagement in social services and a tax policy to stimulate personal initiative and responsibility. And although some social democratic parties have adopted some key Christian democratic values, the set of values in social-democratic programmes may still be distinguished from the configuration of basic Christian democratic values – primarily by Christian democracy’s linking of *subsidiarity*, the *person* and *personal responsibility* to *freedom*, *justice* and *solidarity*.

What about Norberto Bobbio’s claim that *equality* can be considered the primary dividing line between the left and the right in European politics?²⁸ *Equality* is a basic value in most social-democratic parties, but has not been assigned status as a basic value in most Christian-democratic parties. The most important Christian-democratic party, the German

²⁸ N. Bobbio, *Destra e sinistra. Ragioni e significati di una distinzione politica* (Donzelli editore, Roma 2004).

CDU, has previously given *equality* a prominent place in its programmes, but in the 2005 CDU-CSU government programme *equality* has a more withdrawn position. The CDU revealed its mixed feelings about the value of *equality* when, in the 1994 platform, it polemically rejected *Gleichmacherei* – the idea that national policy can or should aim at making everything the same. Such formulations cannot be found in any social-democratic programme. Besides that, an analysis of recent party programmes does demonstrate that social-democratic parties are more inclined to demand redistribution through the tax system than are Christian-democratic parties. Thus, we can support Bobbíos claim at least partially. The demand for *more equality* – or, *less inequality* – distinguishes the rhetorical positions of parties on the left and right.

However, we should note that the social democratic concept of *justice* seems to drift towards the Christian democratic concept of justice – reducing the emphasis of redistribution and increasing the emphasis on balance between effort or contribution and benefits, as recent reforms of old age pension in Sweden and Norway illustrate. Such redefinitions will have implications for the concept of solidarity as well – and bringing the social democratic concept closer to the Christian democratic concept. Thus, tendencies toward convergence may be noted, making political ideologies less clear-cut and giving them a more hybrid character.

The ideological demarcation lines between these opposing parties are further blurred by the fact that some social democratic parties have recently begun to apply key concepts from the Christian democratic language of values to their own party programmes. This first happened when the Italian DS applied the concept of *subsidiarity* in its programme in 2000. A similar application is found in the German SPD programme of 2005. The concept of the *person* is found in the Swedish SAP programme of 2001 and in the Italian DS programme of 2003. Thus, there is an increasing overlapping of the values of social-democratic and Christian-democratic parties.

A European concept of solidarity?

Social democratic and Christian democratic parties developed their ideologies within their national contexts, but in frequent contact with their sister parties in other countries. Already in 1953, Christian democratic members of Parliament in the six member states founded a European group within the Parliamentary assembly of the European Steel Community. In 1976, the *European People's Party* (EPP) was established. Christian democrats such as Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, and Alcide De Gasperi - the founding fathers of the European Community - were active supporters of the establishment of the EPP as well. The

common adherence to the *European Peoples Party* contributed to the increasing similarity in programme ideology of European centre-right parties. At the congress in Athens in 1992, the EPP approved a platform that spelled out Christian democratic values. Here, core values in Catholic social teaching are declared to be basic values for EPP – personalism, freedom and responsibility, equality, justice, subsidiarity, and solidarity. These values are said to be interdependent, equally important and universally applicable. Freedom is the basis for justice and solidarity, which are indissolubly linked to each other, the programme declared.

Neoliberalism is criticised, because it ignores the social dimensions of the free market. However, it argues for a federal Europe, and the formulations about subsidiarity are more predominant than references to solidarity between the peoples or member states.

Social democratic parties from all over the world were members of the *Socialist International* (SI), which was established in 1951. The SI adopted a language of solidarity at the congress in Geneva in 1976. The resolution from the Geneva congress made frequent use of the concept of solidarity and applied it both to the relationship with the Third World, future generations, and the environment, sometimes associated with *justice*. The SI developed into a more central forum for discussion and reflection about ideology. Although socialists from different countries collaborated in European assemblies, the road to set up a transnational European social democratic party was more troublesome than for Christian democrats. This took place not until 1992, stimulated by the development towards integration in the EU.²⁹ Those who took part in these discussions were largely the same persons who had influenced the ideological development in the different social democratic parties of Western Europe. Consequently, they brought ideas from their national debates to the SI and the European collaboration efforts and vice versa.

²⁹ S. Hix and U. Lesse, *Shaping a Vision. A History of the Party of European Socialists 1957-2002*. <http://www.pes.org/en/pes-action/pes-documents/publications>, accessed at 15.08 2011.

The founding fathers of the European Community mentioned above saw their undertaking both as an economic and a political undertaking,³⁰ based on solidarity and motivated by their Christian democratic ideology. However, it took some time until the EC started developing a common normative framework, and the Treaty of Rome, however, did not directly reflect such values. The text contained no direct references to values, but concentrated upon the implementation of the four freedoms, customs and the institutional setup of the common market.

During the years, the EC developed beyond a market regime and constructed a normative basis as well.³¹ With the Treaty of Maastricht, the name of the community was changed from *The European Economic Community* to *The European Community*. Omitting “economic” signalled a more ambitious objective of collaboration and integration. Article 2 emphasised not only economic goals such as non-inflationary growth, but high level of employment and of social protection, economic and social cohesion and solidarity. Succeeding charters and declarations developed further a common set of ideological concepts and values. In The Charter of basic rights, approved in Nice in 2001, chapter IV was titled “Solidarity”, and established individual and collective rights in the labour market and rights to different forms of social protection. Thus, it represented another compromise between the three central political ideologies in Europe – Anglo-Saxon liberalism, the continental Christian democratic tradition and the German-Nordic social democratic tradition.

The Treaty on European Union, which was finally ratified by all Member States in 2009, was a carefully composed compromise between these three ideologies. The political language in this text, however, is most clearly influenced by the language of Christian democratic ideology. All key concepts and markers are included – the social market, the dignity of man, justice and social integration (cohesion), solidarity and subsidiarity. Liberalism and social democracy have also succeeded in introducing their markers – respectively for instance strong competitive power, pluralism, full employment, and gender equality. The EU shall contribute to the rest of the world, contribute to sustainable development, solidarity and reciprocal respect, and work for a trade which at the same time should be both free and just.

³⁰ D. W. Urwin, ‘The Community of Europe. A History of European Integration since 1945’ (Longman, London 1991).

³¹ E. O. Eriksen, ‘Introduction’, in E. O. Eriksen (ed.), *Making the European Polity. Reflexive integration in the EU* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2005), 9-29. The author distinguishes presents three alternatives to a restricted market regime – a regulatory entity based on transnational structures of governance, a rights based post-national union – federation – with political rights, and a value based polity, based common European identity.

Identity and solidarity has most often grown out of a common feeling of belonging to a group, class or nation, through historical processes with common experiences, struggle and reciprocal acceptance where obstacles such as different languages and religions have been overcome.³² The ambition to develop a constitution could have contributed to a stronger feeling of common identity and stronger solidarity between the peoples of the member state,³³ but was met with popular resistance in several countries and had to be given up. The resulting treaty contains mainly the same ideological concepts as the draft for the constitution. Jürgen Habermas had some years earlier argued that the labour movement tradition and the Christian social doctrines provides a background for social solidarity, and that a postnational democracy and for a constitutional process in the EU could contribute to building European identity and solidarity.³⁴ Disappointed, he now described the resulting Treaty as a “bureaucratically negotiated compromise to be pushed through behind the backs of the citizenry”.³⁵

The financial crisis of 2008 and even more that of 2011 has demonstrated both the potentials and the limits of solidarity in Europe. On the one hand, the reluctance and the late reactions from the German prime minister reflects the critical attitudes of the German people to pay for financial trouble in other EU-countries. The German debate, where complaints about the ‘lazy Greeks’ could be heard, was mirrored in the opinion in Greece, with correspondent negative feelings towards Germany. Thus, it is highly doubtful that the crisis contributed to solidarity at the grass root level in the two member states.

On the other hand, the creation of *The European Financial Stability Facility* (EFSF) by the euro area member states was certainly an expression of solidarity with the crisis-ridden economies of Greece and other member states. It was based not only on altruism in the contributing states, but on the feeling of common destiny and common interests, as the bankruptcy of for instance Greece might have a strongly negative impact on the contributing states as well. This was also the case when the European Central Bank decided to assist Italy with buying Italian bonds. However, the contributing states were not willing to assist states in trouble without conditions. Among these was austerity policy with demands to cut pensions

³² See Pombeni, Paolo. *The International Spectator* no 1 2003.

³³ For a discussion, see B. Peters, ‘Public discourse, identity and the problem of democratic legitimacy’, and G. Delaney, ‘The Quest for European identity in E. O. Eriksen (ed.), *Making the European Polity. Reflexive integration in the EU* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2005), 84-124 and 127-142. See also the discussion in *Journal of European Public Policy*, for instance S. S. Grewal ‘Habermas, law and European social policy: a rejoinder to Murphy, No 2 2010.

³⁴ J. Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation. Political Essays* (Polity, Oxford, 2001), and ‘Why Europe needs a constitutio’, in E. O. Eriksen, J. F. Fossum and A. J. Menéndez, *Developing a Constitution for Europe* (Routledge, London, 2004).

³⁵ J. Habermas. 2008. A Search for Europe’s Future. And the Wheels Stopped Turning. Spiegel Online. <http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,560549,00.html>. Accessed at 13.08 2011.

and other social benefits, reduce salaries in the public sector and privatize public enterprises, which probably will increase unemployment. Such demands would be in conflict with a socialist or social democratic concept of solidarity and Keynesian economic policy, but not with a Christian democratic concept, as this concept of solidarity is modified by the personal responsibility and justice. Responsibility implies in this context that states who have behaved irresponsibly should take action themselves. The Christian democratic – and the liberal concept of justice - implies that there should be a balance between the assistance that you receive and your own contribution or effort. In this perspective, Germans, who may retire at 67, should not be blamed for their reluctance to help Greeks to continue to go on pension at 65.

This is not the place to discuss the relationship between ideological language and practical politics or to what extent the use of the concept of solidarity in EU-documents has been accompanied by a corresponding politics of solidarity. The political language in EU-documents may have contributed to a more common political language among political elites, but it is certainly not firmly rooted in the populations of the member states. Besides, as mentioned, the key concepts in EU documents are ambiguous and easy to define and redefine according to the position of different stake-holders.

Anyway, the analysis of EU-documents has demonstrated that a European concept of solidarity exists and is located in a specific political language with other normative concepts. On the one hand, this discourse is distinguishable from both Anglo-Saxon, particularly US-, liberalism and from Northern social democratic political discourse. On the other hand, it consists of a series of ideological concepts from all the three strands of European political thought. Thus, it is a part of a hybrid ideology with a set of flexible concepts which makes it possible to stretch solidarity in different directions and redefine it according to need and circumstances and redefinitions of other key concepts such as justice, subsidiarity and freedom.

Challenges

What are the prospects for social democratic and Christian democratic solidarity in politics today? The two conceptions of solidarity are important only to the extent to which social democratic and Christian democratic parties are influential. Generally speaking, the political influence and significance of political parties has been reduced since the 1960s or 1970s. Voter identification with political parties has weakened, voter trust in political parties has been reduced, and memberships have declined. Parties have lost some of their capacity to

mobilise mass participation, to articulate political interests and to integrate the interests of different classes and groups, and this applies in equal measure to social democratic and Christian democratic parties. New media and information technology have created alternative channels for political communication, and new social movements have succeeded in mobilising people for solidarity and for other issues. Social democracy is confronted with a new situation, since the industrial working class has been numerically reduced, but also because of the erosion of *class* as an influential factor for voter selection. Workers, these days, vote for an assortment of political parties. For Christian democracy, the secularisation of society has reduced the significance of religion in politics. The increasing individualism has transformed religion into a home-made mixture of elements created or selected by the individual. The result is that believers vote for all sorts of political parties and they do so with greater frequency than before.

Moreover, the key role of solidarity in social democratic and Christian democratic programmes are only partially founded upon and reflected in the attitudes of those who vote for these parties. An analysis of comparative survey data indicates that social democratic and Christian democratic voters generally express attitudes of solidarity somewhat more strongly than do voters who are more to the right. This finding does vary between countries, but differences are not very strong. The idea of equality is more pronounced for social democratic voters than it is for Christian democratic voters or for those voters who are more to the right, but even among social democratic voters, the preference for equality is not very strong. Christian democratic voters, on the other hand, are not more inclined to support issues that indicate the idea of subsidiarity. Generally speaking, the differences in ideology between voters who support social democratic parties and voters who support Christian democratic parties are not very strong, and ideological confines are blurring.³⁶

However, the same comparative analysis does, surprisingly, reveal that attitudes of equality are stronger in the least developed welfare state than in the well-developed Scandinavian welfare states. The finding that the desire for equality is stronger in nations that are less prosperous, where the income level is lower and the welfare state is less developed may indicate that there are limits to solidarity based upon a generally high quality of life. The desire for equality and for a better redistribution may be reduced when prosperity and a generally higher standard of living are combined with a high degree of social protection. The

³⁶ S. Stjernø and A. Johannessen, Attitudes of solidarity in Europe (Report Oslo University College 23, Oslo 2004).

orientation to desire more equality in society is also restricted by values that promote individualism and meritocracy and this, too, may undermine or erode solidarity.

The first decade of the new millennium has confronted both social democracy and Christian democracy with great challenges. In 2011, social democratic parties are in power only in Spain, Greece, and Norway, but also there the prospects of being reconfirmed at the next elections are highly insecure. To compete with conservative or Christian democratic parties, social democracy has moved to the right, and the literature abounds with accusations that social democracy and politics in general have left solidarity behind.

Neither is the prospect for Christian democratic solidarity, as we knew it, convincing. Contrary to what we have witnessed in the US and in other parts of the world, European politics and society have become more secularised. Religion in Europe has lost much of its ability to influence the political behaviour of citizens and voters. Moreover, both Catholic and Protestant believers vote for parties that span the political spectrum, and Christian democracy no longer has a monopoly representing Europeans who regard themselves as Christians. At present, Christian democratic parties are unable to transform religious values into practical politics. In the German CDU, the Catholic *Arbeitnehmer-Flügel* (*employee-wing*) has lost both members and influence in the party, and the party leader - the Protestant Angela Merkel - represents individualism more than the collective aspects of Catholic social teaching.

In Italy, the party that most coherently represents the Christian democratic tradition – UDC – has not much support. Berlusconi's *Il popolo della libertà* sometimes claims to be the inheritor of *Democrazia Cristiana*, but although its verbal support to classic Christian democratic values, it differs in too many respects in terms of politics, style and functions to be a credible heir. In many other European countries, conservative parties are more influential than Christian democratic parties. Besides that, many Christian democratic parties have moved to the right and emphasise personal responsibility and subsidiarity more than solidarity. Given this current state, we would not expect the Christian democratic ideology of solidarity to be influential in European politics in the years to come.

Both social democracy and Christian democracy are confronted with a new type of challenge. In many countries right wing populist parties have achieved considerable electoral support in the traditional working class and have eroded the social basis of social democracy. Although there are differences between these parties, the formulation of Le Pen *socially left, economically right, but above all French* was aptly chosen to characterise the right wing populist parties. They do not preach the individualism of traditional liberalism, but a new mixture of individualism and a nationally oriented collectivism. They struggle for more

individual autonomy and are against bureaucracy and regulations. At the same time, they express consumer interests in publicly financed social and health services, but argue that such services can be operated, organised or owned privately. To the degree that these parties are preoccupied with solidarity the basis for the solidarity is the nation – or as in Italy, a part of the national territory. Their idea of solidarity is restricted and directed against those who they considered to be strangers. Their discourse pits the national or regional *we* against those strangers who are referred to as *they*. This new ideological mix represents a strong challenge to both social democracy and Christian democracy and to their traditional ideas of solidarity.

Finally, the financial crisis represents a challenge not only to European solidarity, but to politics which protect against social risks and redistribute from the rich to the poor in the countries that are most affected by the crisis. Cuts in social benefits and social services, liberalisation of the labour market, privatisation of public institutions will hit those who are most in need of the welfare state, reduce the capacity of the welfare states for social protection, and weaken social integration.

The politics of solidarity are in a precarious state in social democratic and Christian democratic parties, but this does not mean that these parties will disappear or cease to be protagonists in European politics. The changed character of voting behaviour has, in some ways, transformed politics to something that operates similar to a market, and voter preferences may change rather abruptly when voters are dissatisfied with present government policies. This market quality does not mean that social democracy and Christian democracy will not survive as political parties. The point is rather that the concept and language of solidarity that these parties have institutionalised in their programmes will probably not be translated into concrete policies and initiatives in the everyday world of practical politics. These concepts were developed under specific historic circumstances and constructed socially in a time when the class structure, the political constellations, and the prevailing ideologies were very different. Ideological concepts have no intrinsic meaning. They change, are redefined and given a new meaning, or meanings, through the struggle and rivalry between those who contest what their proper content should be. This will certainly be the case for the concepts of social democratic and Christian democratic solidarity in future decades of the 21st century.

However, all ideas of solidarity share a common and necessary core – that the free development of the market must be limited by some kind of social buffers. In a world where the market colonizes ever more aspects of life and society and where globalisation makes us all more vulnerable, the welfare state is needed to protect us against old and new social risks.

The true challenge in our immediate future should not be whether there should be a welfare state or not, but how it should be designed. How should collective solidarity and redistribution be combined with personal responsibility and the individual freedom to choose? How should self-realization and the right to take personal risks be combined with personal responsibility for own choices? These are the central dilemmas that all contemporary political parties and all reflective individuals must confront.